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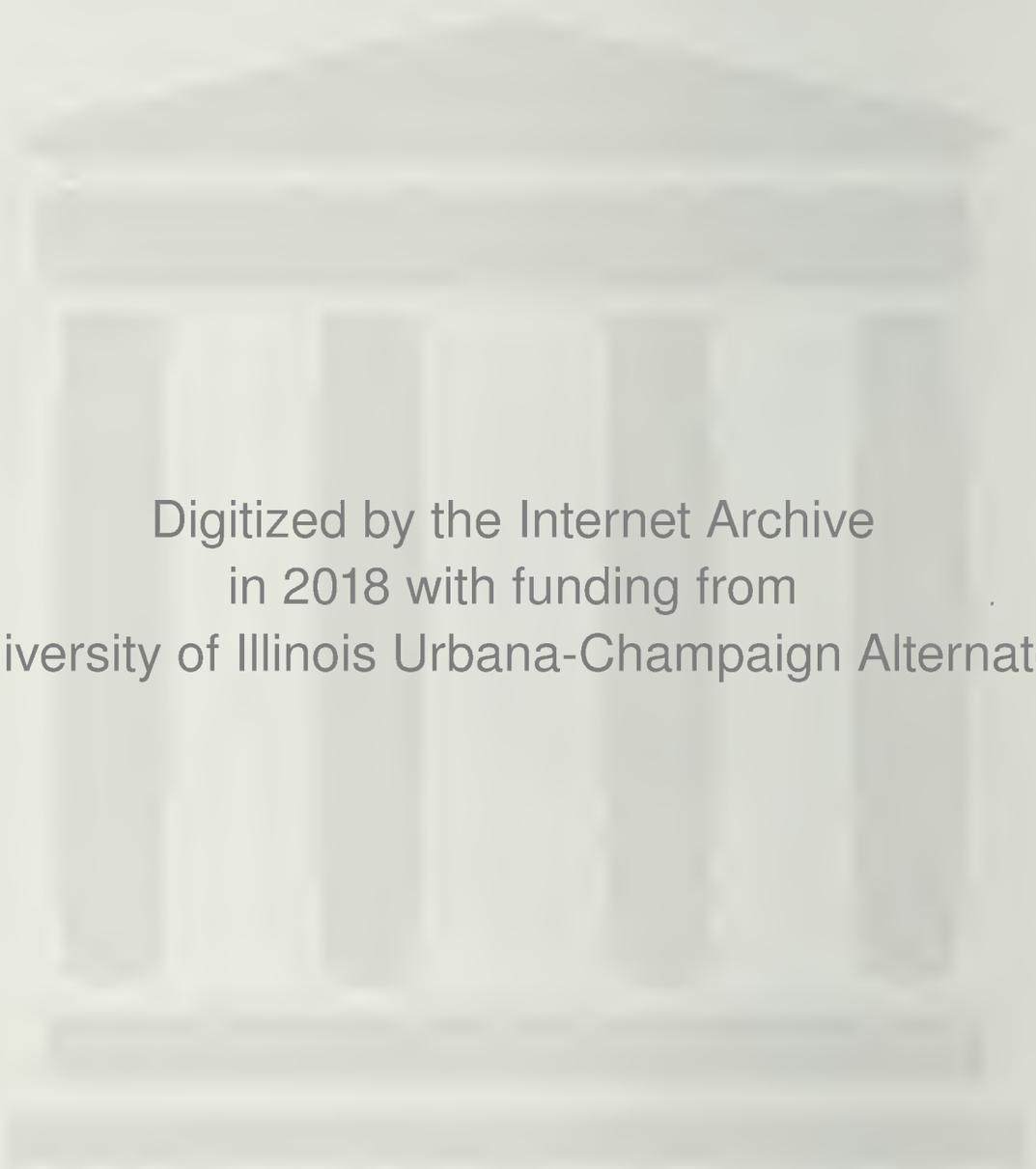

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THIRD PARTIES.

[FROM THE NATIONAL ERA.]

PHILADELPHIA:
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No. 7 Carter's Alley.
1851.

The Article which follows appeared in the National Era of May 1 and subsequent numbers of that well-tr ed journal. If the views which it presents so clearly could receive an ıdditional recommendation, it would be found in the announcement by the Editor of the Era that it is from the pen of Dr. William Elder.

June 19, 1851.

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"THE DUTY OF ANTI-SLAVERY VOTERS."

May 1, 1851.

The question of questions with the readers and writers of the *Era* just now, is being discussed under this caption. In terms very general you answer it, (in your leader of the 20th February:) "We can (ought to) vote our principles into office." "Use the ballot-box for the establishment of free principles." "In every State we should take care to insure the election of anti-slavery men * * * by using our elective franchise wisely."

Taken together, your article is clear and unequivocal upon the point of *duty*. I read the sentences quoted with emphasis upon the words *insure* and *wisely*, and insist upon so enforcing and directing their significance. Duty gets a different statement and drift when calculated from the point of results, from what it receives when inferred from general principles without any consideration of results. In the one case, a man may justify himself by doing no wrong, though at the expense of doing nothing useful for the excellent end in view; in the other, he will make sure to do right, and whatever is practicable and expedient also. In the one, the man is intent upon saving his own soul and maintaining his consistency of principle, whatever becomes of the enterprise; in the other, he throws his soul into it, equally careful for both, under the conviction that there must be some right way of doing and getting the thing done, if it be a duty at all. The one may stop short with self sacrifice and solemn protest, the other sets his heart earnestly upon

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achievement. The one is sublime in principle, the other beneficent in practice, with all the possible difference that may be between abstract truth and providential use.

In the interspace and difference of these two apprehensions of duty, your word *wisely* mediates, for expediency is the wisdom of actual life—the adjustment, every moment demanded, of principles to affairs, in order to effect the greatest possible good in the circumstances, without obscuring, or weakening, or offending against the truth which rightfully rules the case. It must not be forgotten, either, that this territory, which is thus under the dominion of an honest discretion, is also the devil's own play-ground—a wilderness of temptation, where he would turn stones into bread to meet an exigency or avoid a trial—a nice pinnacle point of balance, hard to maintain, from which he tempts world-menders to cast themselves in headlong impatience—a grand prospect, offering glorious success in reward of demon worship! Heaven help us! Besides being honest, we need to be wise as serpents, avoiding their wickedness, or, for the world's use, we might as well not be at all.

I am going to assume a general assent to your statement of our *duty*. By which I understand explicitly, in the first place, that we must do something; secondly, that we must do it in truth and righteousness; and, thirdly, that we must do as much of it as possible, without shrinking from the conditions, in order to take care of the rest of our goodness and wisdom which we cannot get into immediate play. In this way, and on these terms, the world does get along—with some help, to be sure, from the impracticables who do the preaching and protesting of the great principles which *over*-rule all, and will, in good time, rule *in* all.

But in the mean time, what of the *method* and *policy* of

our action in the premises? This is the *open* question; very full of difficulty in itself, for it envolves the whole theory of reform, which, perhaps, nobody understands thoroughly; and is, besides, complicated by different opinions sharply opposed to each other, and obscured, also, by much doubt and hopelessness, which demand satisfaction before they can be arrayed into any shape for service.

One opinion would return, in effect, to the old close-communion Liberty organization, pivoted upon its one idea; another would go forward to something still more severely and exactly conscientious than that, for the sake of scrupulousness and logical perfectness: a third would organize a reserve guard of light troops, choice men and brave spirits, capable of being wheeled into line and brought to the charge wherever a dash might be made in the heat of a conflict, with the whole field of politics, and both sides of the battle, for range of action; a fourth, worn out in the old service, and tired of drill, will enlist nowhere, and answer to no muster-roll, but will vote for officers only who promise to fight for the right; and perhaps another variety is ready for re-absorption into their old parties, from which they rose, in the notion that a few drops of fresh water may sensibly abate the saltness of the sea. And there remains still another way, which you suggest, (in *Era*, No. 219,) as the "thought of many friends;" and "if we *are* to have a *new* national organization," it has your approbation, to wit: "The formation of a new party, taking the Democratic principle as its central idea, and boldly applying it to the solution of all the political questions now pressing upon the public mind."

Without charging myself with the orderly treatment of these propositions, I will offer some thoughts upon them,

expecting the application wherever it is clear and correct in the reader's apprehension.

A political party cannot be built upon a sentiment which respects only the interests of a small or otherwise inconsiderable class of the people, very unlike in circumstances and wants from the mass; because, the general business of Government, and the rights of other classes, are imperative; because, the progress and promise of the established order must go forward; and because, one reform will not wait for another, less favorably circumstanced, or be postponed or excluded by it.

Nay, more: a political party and policy cannot be built upon a sentiment at all. They must grow out of interests —*all* the interests which Government is concerned about. A great idea may, indeed, monopolize the attention of a community for a time; perhaps one important specialty or another does exclusively command the public mind until it gets settled; but whenever such particular sentiment or interest is really strong enough to employ a party, or form one, it is strong enough to constrain an existing one. New organizations are not necessary to new movements, unless they are revolutionary in their character and manner of working; neither can such separate organizations sustain themselves long enough for success, because they have their own partialism and defectiveness to answer for, as well as their proper antagonism to meet in its fortified places.

A moral reform, as such, is not the legitimate business of Government functionaries. They are appropriately occupied only with the conduct of affairs, according to the principles which rule in the Constitution. The "Higher Law" is not the rule of representative legislation; republicanism restrains its representatives to the duty of reflecting the

public sentiment and giving form and effect to the public will. . A member of Congress is not deputed to digest the Divine will into statutes to be enforced by courts of justice, but as an agent to effectuate that of his constituency. The "Higher Law" is the rule of right, the rule of the individual conscience; but no Democratic legislator has the right to misrepresent the people for whom he acts, either by a higher or lower law than reflects them truly. He should not deceive them in their suffrages, nor should he disappoint them in his services. The system of civil government and the economy of society are so much below the truth, so sadly out of harmony with right, that we must not expect conformity to good conscience and the Divine will in the administration of affairs. Are we not a Christian people? Yet what impediment did our morality and religion oppose to the annexation of Texas, and the assumption of her crimes—to the Mexican war—to the Compromise measures of the last Congress? These things have all happened within the last seven years! Seven years before the first of them, they all felt incredible and impossible; but they are facts now; not intolerable, but quietly familiar. A moral sentiment claim controlling authority in Government! Why, one hero of that war has been elected President of the nation for the glory of it, and another is now a candidate upon its merits, and all the prominent aspirants for public favor are building their hopes upon one or other of the enormities of this bloody week of years!

A moral sentiment inaugurated in the system of politics! American Republicanism separates Church and State, divorces religion from politics upon system, and our churches surrender to the Government supremacy in all points of morals which it chooses to usurp! Is it worth while to talk

of carrying a principle of piety, christian duty, and brotherly love, into the Administration, while it is discountenanced by the *churches* to which the officers belong?

I conclude that slavery, considered as a sin, an immorality, or wrong inflicted upon our neighbor, offers no complete basis for a political party, and no nucleus for a political organization. We have seen the higher law mocked and scorned when it was arrayed point-blank against the lower. Where it could not be evaded it was defied, and the Chief Priests have joined with Herod and Pontius Pilate in its crucifixion. From which we learn that the Christianity of to-day will not submit to that of the millennium; nay, that it will not tolerate it, but joins with patriotism in calling upon Pilate to crucify it as he is a friend to Cæsar. But—it is not the business of philosophy to rail at facts, but to learn by them.

This is not said in doubt or condemnation of our organized movements in the past. Whatever expectations they have disappointed, they yet have answered their proper ends. They have informed public opinion and awakened public sentiment, by means of oral discussion, and newspaper and periodical publications; and they have carried their system of propagandism into the halls of Congress, and perhaps every free State Legislature in the Union: all means have been employed that could give earnestness and interest to the discussion, until every interest and enterprise of the times, in both Church and State, has been reached by it; until abolitionism has become an institution with all the apparatus and relations of a religious, moral, and political reform. It has had its special representatives in most of the Legislatures of the North, as well as in both branches of the National Congress, though it has not, I believe, car-

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ried any measure of policy by its own proper organic force —its success having been achieved, generally, through coalitions with minority parties, where, in conjunction, they happened to have the required strength.

In saying that the Liberty party could not get established in the Government, I am not saying that its existence was a mistake, for it may have been a proper and necessary means of forwarding the cause in that sphere and direction; and I think it was; and I think, for this reason, that it was worth all the labor and money which it cost. The disappointment of an ostensible aim is nothing in a right effort, if its proper effect is nevertheless secured.

In 1848 the Liberty party was merged in a new organization, with a creed intended to cover all the issues then available as rallying-points, and deserving of such support. This fact, itself, is evidence that the former movement had become incapable of the expected service. In other words, the party felt that it would no longer avail to be only preachers of a supplementary gospel of politics, or to stand still in the attitude of watching and criticising the great parties who were fighting within reach of the victory, but that it must bring itself into the front of the battle, with all the means of success, and all the capacities to administer the power contended for.

When the Liberty party was formed, it was right; talent and zeal are good for nothing if the amount invested in that movement could not secure against a total blunder. While it lived it was right, and when it died it was because it had fulfilled its office and lost its capacity for use by change of the conditions which had called it into being. A new method was made necessary by the very success of the old.

These notions of a party, formed upon a single idea, or a

specialty less than a whole governmental system, are corroborated, I think, by extending them to the case of the anti-slavery representatives elected to both Houses of Congress; that is, by looking at the actual successes of the scheme, as well as inferring its working capacities from general considerations.

In the lower House, nearly a dozen men of extraordinary abilities and zeal represent the anti-slavery sentiment, and, in fact, permit no opportunity for its defence and advocacy to pass unimproved. In the earlier days of the controversy, Adams and Giddings took the position and pressed the doctrines of the movement with all the effect that mind of the highest force and range, and heart of the firmest quality, could insure. They had the nation for their audience, and nothing was wanting in the champions, the cause, or its conditions, to agitate a people thoroughly. From that day to this, the assault has not slackened fire or altered its aim; and Hale in the Senate has for years now been as active, capable, and efficient, as the warmest friend could wish. I believe that every man sent to Congress expressly on this errand has done his whole duty. The men of other parties have disappointed our reasonable expectations and broken their express pledges; but our own representatives in no instance. The last seven years has brought up the subject in every form, and we have had our champions present, in every variety of quality and adaptation, to give it the most ample and thorough development. For all the purposes of agitation and propagandism, the Congressional controversy has been full to complete satisfaction.

And now the question comes up, Have we any thing more to hope from this agency? Or, is it so promising that we should address all our energies to its continuance and extension?

My own opinion is, that an Abolition speech in Congress has no longer any special or considerable power to arouse or convince, any more than if it had equal publicity through our other means of publication; and I think that the inefficacy of such speeches to the legitimate ends of legislation is now felt as a fault, at the same time that they afford no compensation in the conviction and persuasion of the public. There is such a thing as the interest and excitement of a debate surviving its utility.

From another ground I draw the same conclusion. Agitation was once the best service that could be rendered to the cause of liberty, and Congress Hall the best place for it. The North understood it so, and desired it; the South understood it so, and feared it. Silence, absolute, was the demand in 1837, and the slaveholders at that time used every means, most unscrupulously, to enforce it. But how is it now? The discussions of slavery have been almost uninterrupted through the period of the last Congress, and they were led off in almost every instance by the pro-slavery leaders! Whatever this change means in other respects, it is a significant one touching the policy of agitation and debate in the Capitol for out-door purposes. And the effect of the long discussion upon the respective Houses! No abolitionist looks without amazement at the reports. He finds none of the effects upon the opposition members which he expected, from the faithful exhibition of the truth, when, some years ago, he labored so hard merely to get it a hearing. Liberty and Slavery have had a hand-to-hand struggle in the freest field of combat in the world; Europe has all the while been shaken with revolutions; and America has been even extravagant in its sympathies; the issues involved were of the most urgent practical importance; the

sentiment and the interests were in their fullest activity; yet the champions of the wrong have not been overwhelmed; they have not been made to confess it; and they are even supported in their defiant attitude by frequent and flagrant apostacies from principle in the ranks of allies which the friends of Liberty relied upon with the greatest assurance. In all these years legislation has constantly answered to the demands of the enemy; the victory rests with the spirit of aggression, and success is, as usual, working out its own justification, and changing itself into glory that passes almost unchallenged!

So soon as the field of debate was fairly opened and freed, the friends of the right brought the abstract principles of truth and righteousness to bear upon the opposition; and behold! this day they are openly repudiated. Seven years ago, these principles asked only a hearing; to-day, they are seeking for shelter and defence! Conscience and the Higher Law have the reputation of a pestilence—Compromise and quiet are the only patriotism and orthodoxy!

A political party with abolitionism for its exclusive, or principal, or central idea, gets no countenance from any of these considerations. In this form and array it has already suffered the defeat of its aims in the policy of the Government and country.

To those to whom this argument is conclusive or unnecessary, it may seem also tedious; but I have other uses for the investigation than its bearing upon this particular proposition, and I proceed with it with this view.

Domestic Slavery at the South surpasses every other evil in the minds of the Abolitionists of the North; but it is not so felt among the people who must be relied upon for political opposition to it. An analysis of the classes of voters in

the North, with their party affinities, would be a most valuable achievement. But our purpose demands only an imperfect classification; and it will be safe loosely to assign the mercantile and manufacturing men, the aspiring politicians, the leading churchmen, and aristocratic capitalists and idlers, to the service of the adverse interest—in a word, all the prosperous, prudent classes, who prefer their prospects and their ease to the odiousness and onerousness of reform and agitation. These, we may as well surrender in the lump to the enemy.

What is the character of our own array and reliances? First, the men of the martyr spirit, and the conscience class. These mustered something less than 7,000 strong in 1840, and in 1844, 62,000, with the issue of slavery extension fairly before the community. Sixty-two thousand out of two and a half millions! If that is not the highest average for an anti-slavery party, it is near enough to judge it by. (In 1848 a large auxiliary force was brought in upon an enlarged platform, but chiefly though an accidental disaffection in the ranks of the Democratic party, and a few recruits from the Whig ranks, induced by its imposing promise. But it was not supposed or intended to be a permanent organization.)

The source of growth and hope of strength for such a party would be chiefly in the class of voters who are not committed by interest or affection to the present ruling parties. These are the laborers and the small proprietaries, who are not specially exposed to temptation. All that are free in their conditions, with all that are either refractory, discontented, or progressive in character; and after these were won and organized, the better portion of the conservatives made ready to move by the promise of immediate,

or at least certain success. One or two hundred thousand devotees of the *sentiment* might be set down for service in any circumstances. But how does the project stand addressed to the other divisions of this hope?

With the multitude of working men employed at wages by capitalists, the question of personal liberty or chattel slavery is by no means the principal one of the times. They are too much occupied with their own social and pecuniary privations, too much occupied with the general interests of productive industry, and the more equal distribution of wealth in their own world, to give an effective sympathy to the slave of the South. With them, the first necessities of life are at stake, or, if daily bread is regularly earned by daily toil, the felt insecurity of the provision presses upon them; and this feeling is enhanced by the wants of that ambition and aspiration which civil freedom inspires for themselves and for their dependencies. They are not so much at ease in their own condition as to feel the impulses of a disinterested philanthropy. The emancipation of the bondman does not come easily home to their sympathies, for the want of analogy to their own evils and necessities. Nor do the theories which grow up out of their own familiar speculations easily apply to the slave's condition.

The English and Irish poor tacitly assent to emancipation doctrines at home, where they mean nothing near and practical to themselves; but not an immigrant in a hundred from either of these islands will acknowledge abolitionism here. They are Democrats, and nothing else, upon the instinct that arrays itself against the forms of oppression which affect themselves, wherever you find them, whether in the alms-house or custom-house, in the church or gin-shop. Daniel O'Connell might say what he pleased in their

name at home, but here he lost all his power on this point, and Father Mathew altered his attitude to the subject marvellously, when he came under the influences of our climate.

These people are coming to us from every kingdom of Europe, by millions; almost immediately they are active elements of our political movements, and they seem, as a rule, insensible to the claims of the chattel slave. For this, there are many occasional causes, but the primary and efficient one is such as affords no hope of removal. And the native laborers of our great cities are, for the like cause, as far from the sentiment, and as indifferent to the demands of Abolitionism, as these.

In truth, it is the great problem of labor, its relations to capital, or the *system of property*, that occupies these people. Bring them a system of rights and remedies in this interest, and they will listen; or give them a method of exerting their political power hopefully to this end, and they will allow you to add whatever philanthropy to remote objects you please, which will not encumber their own work. They are not hostile, but they are not concerned; and if ever they behave with violent injustice in this matter, it is not from any sentimental antagonism, but in recklessness and wantonness toward that which is nothing to them but its annoyance.

The free negro and the slave understand the matter of personal liberty much better than these. The want of it, and the fresh and well-contrasted enjoyment of it, keep the feeling warm and strong in our colored people; but it touches the free laborer nowhere near enough to be felt vehemently. He has never feared bondage; he does not find his freedom a positive and productive blessing; self-govern-

ment is pretty well balanced in his condition, by self-dependence, with all its burdens and responsibilities; for, in embarrassed circumstances it is not a matter of perpetual exultation, and for that reason it is less efficient as a sentiment. Indeed, there are some pinching places in the toiler's experiences where the Declaration of Independence does feel like "a rhetorical flourish," and that "inalienable liberty" a mockery, which, while it forbids the sale of the man's bones and muscles upon the auction-block, nevertheless allows the sale of all there is in them every day at the counter of the employer, without hope of an alternative for free choice.

I am neither assuming nor accepting that theory of human nature which has been called the "selfish system," nor am I denying to the class of men under discussion any quality which humanity, in any condition, may boast of. The mob and the millionaires, the mass and the upper ten, are all alike essentially; they are all men—such men as God will yet make a beautiful world of. Indeed, if there be any difference of receptivity for truth induced by conditions, it is the poor who first accept the gospel of reform; for it is to them that it is eminently adapted; but it is because it is so adapted to their own conditions that they receive it. The proclamation of "liberty to the captive" makes the "year of the Lord acceptable to *them that are bound.*" Nothing in the nature of things can better dispose the poor and illiterate toward redeeming truth than the rich, cultivated, and refined, except their special adjustment to it in circumstances; and accordingly, it is found, in all time, that the majorities have accepted for themselves what they wanted for themselves, neglecting, if not opposing, the extension beyond their own sphere and

affinities. The believing Jew has ever his doubts if the Gentiles are included in the covenant of grace; and it is only the greater spirits who understand the brotherhood, the unity, of the race. Closely examined, the difference between tyrant and slave, oppressed and oppressor, is not so great that the whole breadth of the "great gulf" lies between them, either here or hereafter. Providence redeems the world by devoting the very highest, his chosen ones, to the service of the lowest. The intermediate styles of men are too nearly in the condition of objects, to be active agents of the beneficent work. The missionary and martyr race look through the whole, they see the end from the beginning, they reveal the truth, anticipating its establishment. In their enthusiasm they are prone to imagine that "the ends of the world have come upon them," that they "stand in the last days," and that "the day of the Lord is at hand." Nevertheless, it is a certainty of both reason and experience, that the "better time" must wait till it is woven gradually and smoothly into the life of the world. Government, which is only the public business of the community, will not take up the redemption of society on speculation; and political parties, whose instincts are measured by their uses, get blind and furious when the over-bright light is flared into their eyes. Reform, to get recognised and legislated into force, must first get itself infused into the life and manners of the people, and thence reflected in the political administration.

My point is, that Southern slavery, though it touches every concern of our lives, mingles in every speculation, and mixes with every form of business—though it follows the American over the world, a shadow upon his path, and an impediment to every movement—though the slave-hunts in which

the African was first captured, in his native wilderness, are reënacted every day before our eyes, in his recapture—chattel slavery is yet not *the* question with the uprising masses of society. They have their own liberty asserted complete in paper charters; they have all its forms in familiar use, and now they are intent upon securing its essence, its substantial promise, in fact. Popular rights, sharply scrutinized, turn out to be only the right and position of a hard fight for the means of life, to the majority; and the common soldiery, in the great battle of business competition, are occupied, as they never were before, with forwarding the progress which they have already made, and securing the actual fruits of it.

Some day soon, the Reformers, who are so upon the sentiment, and the Progressives, who are busy with their own necessities, will understand each other; the Insight and the Impulse will harmonize, and the old repugnances against each other will be dropped along with the old insurrectionary battle-cries which have lost all their pertinence and power; for, in fact, the feudalism of property which reigns now, is wholly unlike the feudalism of force, against which the old revolutions were arrayed; and republican liberty answers even better all the purposes of the new dynasty than absolute monarchy could do. The despotism of caste, color, prejudice and bigotry, are over, with all their pride and dignity. The parties in the struggle really are capital and labor, and the old watchwords of personal liberty and political enfranchisement have lost much of their directness of application, and, in proportion, their inspiration. Once they were the object and end, now they are but a scaffolding to reach it. But when all the parties of progress fully comprehend the philosophy and method of their great

purpose, it will be accomplished; for then it will have all its friends in firm array, it will have the best use of all its own power, and the consent also of all that is important in the opposition; for the integral plan will comprehend them and their interests too. The achievement will not stand upon the precarious foundation of conquest, but on the broad basis of accorded right, and then "a nation may be born in a day," but not till then.

The project of a new Democratic party, with your permission, I will examine in my next, and will then, perhaps, find some conclusion in my ideas about the general matter, here something too bald and disjointed in form for my purpose.

SENIOR.

In my former communication I reached the conclusion that a political party, pivoted upon the anti-slavery sentiment, or mainly devoted to it and controlled by it, has no such adaptation to the administration of the Government, and no such expediency and availability even for its own proper ends, as might justify its policy.

I cannot presume that your readers gave my thoughts such consideration as will have kept them fresh in memory through their interrupted publication, but I do not intend now to rehearse the points for my present use, though I need their service in my promised discussion of the project of "A New Party taking the Democratic principle as its central idea, and boldly applying it to the solution of all the questions now pressing upon the public mind."

This scheme of a New Democratic Party must be con-

sidered not only as to its intrinsic character, but in reference to the particular want which it is to meet; for it is a suggestion made to the anti-slavery voters of the country, and offered to them as a method of effecting their special object, to wit: "the divorce of the Federal Government from all support of slavery, and opposition to the evil within constitutional limits." And, moreover, while considering it at one time, as to its several special aims, for it has many, and at another, in its entirety of character and action, it must not be forgotten that its practicability and efficiency depend upon the equal earnestness and energy of every principle and policy embraced in its creed; and this to such degree and effect, that the party would in fact be neither Anti-Slavery, Land Reform, Free Trade, nor anything else that it promises, except as these are Democratic and mutually helpful, dependent, and harmonious.

The questions "pressing" for governmental action and settlement now, and for which such new party must provide an opinion and a position in its system, are, Anti-Slavery; Land Reform; River and Harbor improvement by the national funds; Election of Officers by the people; Tariff for Revenue with incidental Protection, or for Revenue only, or, Free Trade and Direct Taxation; the Banking system; Exemption of the Homestead from attachment for debt; Restriction upon Land Monopoly; and sundry other questions of equal interest with the best of these. Some of these things, mentioned and intimated, are perhaps not prominent interests in an organization for National purposes, because they do not fall within the functions of the Federal Government, but they are all of high importance in State action, and the party that is to apply "the Democratic idea to all the questions pressing upon the public

mind," must agree upon them before it can get into the harmony required for unitary action upon any of them.

The new organization proposes to gather up the Reformers and Progressives of all parties, and embody them by force of their various affinities in a separate and independent party; and with this view, it spreads a platform with a plank in it for every opinion which the Democratic idea is capable of. Very well—every earnest, honest man in the nation is wishing and waiting for an effective array of the wisdom and goodness of the country. And what has hindered, hitherto? The excellence of the idea has ever been just as apparent and attractive as it can be made; yet, wonderfully enough, no such party exists, and its *practicability* is a question now! And very questionable it is, too, because if it were as feasible as beautiful, it would assuredly be in full life and governing the nation to-day; for, the men who have any enmity to the general welfare, or any interest in the continuance of abuses, are surely much less than a majority of our three millions of voters.

But with the understanding of all parties clear, and their motives all pure, there is a grand difference between submitting to exceptionable things in an established party—one of the two into which the country is regularly divided—and accepting the overtures of a new one got up to secure to *every* man his special preferences, and which must, besides, be built up into a majority before it can do anything which it proposes.

The old party to which a man belongs has some thing or things in it for which he gave it his attachments, things all the dearer to him for all the fighting he has done for them with the enemy; and, it has the power to effect them. If occasionally it does nothing that he wishes, and opposes the

things he wishes most, there always remains to him some promise, and especially some possibility, that keeps the hope of better things alive in him. He adheres, though he cannot give reasons, or answer objections, or justify inconsistencies.

The popular instinct in a rough sort of omnibus classification divides good and evil with only one partition line, so that in the freest Governments there are usually but two political parties. Indeed, there can be but two in the final issue of questions, wherever the majority principle decides all differences. Fragments feel that they must coalesce, and swallow all repugnancies less than the very greatest, when the last trial comes; and it is natural enough, under the anticipation of this necessity, to compromise everything but the highest for the sake of the highest, or for the hopefullest, if that is all that is possible, or even for the old grudge when all hopes are lost, and nothing but fears are left. But even when attachments weaken and old antagonisms abate, so that party feeling sits light and loose, and dissatisfaction goes the length of a total divorce from the old, a transference to the new is not yet insured; for men are not the less scrupulous about new commitments for the resistance they have made against former differences, and the fine practice in hard fighting which it afforded, but the contrary. There are no such radicals as the refugees from despotism, and there is no conscience so difficult as a reformer's. Sectarianism is secession's own brood, and those who divide for opinion's sake are as likely to split at one seam as another, and in fact usually do go far to demonstrate that men, like matter, are infinitely divisible.

Moreover, (I am not speaking for myself,) the evils and sins of the established order seem unavoidable, and get a

shelter under the general excuses of human infirmity and necessity; but those of a new voluntary arrangement feel as if they were assumed freely, and brought an unmitigated responsibility with them. The favorite doctrine may be duly honored, but there are the other things that must come with it, some of them unwelcome; some of them odious; and they are not like the old mischiefs, to be endured only, but to be accepted and adopted! Above all, a man leaves the old because it will *do* nothing that he wishes, and will *do* something that he opposes; (sentiments and opinions merely he could overlook). Will he join the new which *can do nothing* that he wishes, though he agrees with it throughout, and may, perchance, demand his approval of something that he disbelieves and dislikes?

I have indicated a dozen points of principle and policy comprehended by the "Democratic idea," about which men may differ after they have agreed upon anti-slavery—points which must severally stand the challenge of every man whose soundness is to be tried by them, and each man must be satisfied with at least all of them which he thinks important, for he is going now upon principle, in total disregard of the new party's present feebleness, and there is no practical good within reach that might compensate for some evil, but the whole is to be adopted for the purpose of propagandism, and must be believed, supported, and defended, until the time of strength comes, and must not be disputed then, when the possible mischief is to take effect. If I do not mistake or exaggerate this consideration, there are differences enough in the varieties of policy to be embraced, to account for the want of such an organization as we are thinking about in the past, and to put the present feasibility into serious doubt.

Differences of drift and difficulties in faith occur everywhere. The anti-slavery man who is most capable of sacrifice is also the least disposed to compromise; and besides his "one idea," he has several others which must be satisfied when they are wakened up. He is generally sound in the matter of personal liberty—the rights of man against property in man, or chattel slavery, and whatever of justice and philanthropy is involved in it. He insists upon civil freedom for all men, and wages for work, against all laws and conventions which refuse them; but for this purpose, and the means of achieving it, will he also pledge himself to the Chartist, Socialist, and industrial Radical, and make common cause with them? And will the "working man," who holds that the laborer ought to be the partner and not the mere machinery of capital, step out of the way to give aid—not to the slave, whose sufferings appeal for his compassion, and in any direct way might have his sympathies—but to an anti-slavery party which will do nothing for him?

There are earnest men among us who believe in their hearts that the best interests of the industrial classes depend upon the protection of home manufactures against the "pauper labor of Europe;" and they insist upon a tariff of duties for revenue, with incidental protection, so distributed and levied as shall in all events secure this end; and they base this policy upon a patriotism and benevolence which they hold to be as great and imperative as compassion for the southern slave, and entitled even to preference, if either must be postponed, because it touches those who are nearer to the level of our natural sympathies, and more immediately and terribly exposed to the evils of misgovernment. And there, to oppose these, are the Radical Demo-

crats, on whom we must so largely rely, with their cry of anti-bank, no monopoly, and no class legislation.

Non-imprisonment for debt, exemption of the homestead and of the household furniture from execution, with a thorough system of school and college education, at the public expense, for every child in the State, are deemed by a large body of liberalists essential to the complete emancipation of the freeman and his family from the disabilities of poverty, and the bondage, mental and personal, which it inflicts; and as much above the claim of legal freedom for the southern slave in importance and urgency, as the cultivated white man outranks the ignorant plantation drudge in social and political value. Here, again, a conscientious difference opposes the required conciliation of parties.

A very large class of the recruits we must count upon are willing to break every legal yoke, and put the whole world upon such equality as diversity of gifts, fortunes, and culture, will allow, but will go no farther to level equalities and remove disabilities. They would give all men equal rights before the law, in parchment and in possibility, but they are firm for order, and for all the defences of individualism, and all the distinctions of wealth, education and rank, that free competition can produce; in the belief that religion, law, and morals, individual and national welfare, and all the best interests of rich and poor, rest upon them. Such men will not accept the extreme of liberty as the remedy for any of our existing slaveries; they hope for a better method.

But there is scarcely any limit to these differences, and the very integrity of the men to be relied upon for the necessary compromises forbids the hope of it; and the passions and prejudices, with all the forms of selfishness and

folly, which disturb the working of the world's affairs in other combinations, are to be expected here as well.

Under all these influences, a third party can expect the support only of such men as are willing to throw away their votes upon it for the sake of doing right in some particular which such party maintains, and for the sake of using its machinery for the purposes of moral suasion and proselytism; and, of those who resort to it in a fit of displeasure and temporary alienation from their old associates, as we witnessed in New York in 1848. There are also a few men in the world who will support perfectly hopeless nominations for a lifetime, on the simple ground that they will do right, because they cannot do better; a class of men, by the way, who are distinguished for always using irresistible arguments against immovable objections, and wisely resting their case upon eternal principles, for the reason that nothing less enduring is likely to last, till the day of their triumph.

There are times, indeed, it must not be forgotten, when protest is the proper expression of despairing principle, and the best rebuke of atrocious wrong. In such circumstances, men can render no higher duty to Truth and Righteousness than the most public and striking declaration of their dissent. Third parties, in such cases, have the noblest uses, and can take the grandest attitudes; but they can have no permanent place in affairs, and no success by their own proper force.

The Free Soil party of the last Presidential contest had all the available questions which were then "pressing upon the public mind," and the most popular side of them, among its sentiments and declared objects; it had quite an array of men and means; and it had party discontent,

but little short of disruption, in one of its great rivals, and an actual division in the other, to help it; yet it failed to command a single electoral vote for its candidates, and was thereupon immediately dissolved. It was pledged in the most positive way to the most unexceptionable anti-slavery action upon the issues then asking settlement by the Federal Government; the opponents of slavery asked no more than it promised, and a statesman wholly indifferent to that question could not blame it with excess; to this it added the best conditioned points of liberal legislation, and endeavored the inauguration of the advance sentiment of Democracy in the Government; and, besides, it brought with it the warranty of the highest names, and the services of some of the best men in the Democratic party. Further: A very large majority of the people of the North were then, as now, in sentiment, opposed to chattel slavery, and in interest were all opposed to its extension and encroachments, which were then pressing as practically and urgently as they could be put; yet, not more than one-eighth of the votes polled in the Free States were given to the party of freedom and progress!

If any one, to avoid the conclusion which this piece of experience furnishes to the argument for a continuance or reorganization of such party, urges that the party was then in its infancy, the answer is two-fold—It died in that infancy, and of course ceased to grow; or, it is a law of third parties that they never come to maturity, but, like certain other anomalies in nature, they are as big the day they are hatched as they ever will be afterwards, until they merge into the standard form again.

Moreover, the withdrawal of the disaffected is not always either an evil or a terror to the erring party; for if the

two rival parties lose about equal numbers, their relative strength is not thereby affected, and as long as the loss is equal, and the seceders not dangerous from their own numbers, an independent party so formed counts nothing, and comes to nothing in the contest; nobody loses anything by them, but those whom they desire to befriend.

I need not repeat here, that when the exigency is such that support cannot rightfully be given, and silence is forbidden by conscience, a party organization and an open protest may be both duty and wisdom, though there be no hope of either immediate or ultimate success for it. But am I not right in the opinion that, ordinarily and simply, the effect of withdrawing the virtue and conscience of the community from the ranks of the governing parties, leaves them to vie with each other in flattering and courting the vice of the times? And if it is fair to infer, or true in fact, that such protesting third party comes from the two rivals in pretty equal proportion, then the secessions rather relieve than constrain the conduct of the regulars.

Be these things as they may, it was in the presence of such a third party that all the enormities of the last seven years have been enacted, and it was against its best efforts directly opposed and exerted. The available questions in its hands were—The right of petition and free debate, Texan annexation, the Mexican war, abolition of the Slave-trade in the District of Columbia, the admission of Oregon and California, settlement of the Texan boundary line, and Slavery in the District and Territories. What has become of all these questions? And what is left of them for use and hope? Slavery in the District and the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law! for it is settled that Utah and New Mexico shall come in as they please to present themselves,

now that the Proviso has failed in their Territorial organization.

I do not say that there is nothing in the general and current conduct of the Government demanding amendment, but I see nothing in it that can be presented with hope of effect after failure with such a hand as we had in the great political game of the past seven years.

Further, I submit that the history of the Missouri struggle gives no help to the idea of an independent organization for the resistance of a great national crime. In 1819–'20, there was no separate anti-slavery party; yet, if I am not very much mistaken, *every* State Legislature of the North instructed its Senators, and requested its members of the House in Congress, to oppose the admission of that State with slavery in its Constitution. The anti-slavery sentiment of that day found as full and effective expression then as a distinct party could have given it, and came something nearer to the accomplishment of its purpose than we have done any time since 1844. The cases may not be parallel, nor the struggles equal in their condition, for all purposes, but it is safe to say that third parties gain nothing by the comparison. It is as easy to say, that if the anti-slavery vote of 1848 had been sprinkled into the great parties, it might have more effectually modified them than it did in its separate action, as it would be to say that if the majorities of the Northern States in 1820 had been represented in Congress by men elected and pledged to that very thing, Henry Clay could not have seduced them from their integrity.

My conviction is that no method of resistance, possible to the reform spirit of this Union, could have altered the results for the better, and I am as well satisfied that the

good and true men of the nation have in all these instances done their best, aye, and their wisest, too, in the premises. I could not have been an honest man, if I had withheld anything either of service or sacrifice which the policy I am now considering so freely has cost me, and I have neither regret nor reproach for the past.

I conclude that an omnibus reform party cannot be organized with reasonable hope of success—that a party of one idea has no proper political capabilities—that any independent third party is only another method of moral suasion or of hopeless protest.

What then?

I do not know that I can satisfy even myself as to the positive "duty of anti-slavery voters" in the present condition of things, but you must allow me a little space for such word as I have to utter upon this most interesting and most difficult point in a future letter.

It is curious that we have not a word for more than two months from any of your correspondents upon the proper policy of the Free Soil party. It must be discussed and settled. I am doing my duty to my friends—"a disagreeable duty"—but not "with alacrity."

SENIOR.

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